

*The Great Charity of Instructing
Poor Children.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

At St. Botolph Aldgate ;

UPON

LORD'S-DAY, *Mar. 24. 1700.*

On the Occasion of

A Charity-School

Newly Erected in that Parish.

By J O S I A H W O O D W A R D,
Minister of Popler.

L O N D O N,

Printed by K. Astwood, for Ra. Symp-
son, at the Harp in St. Paul's
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WOODWARD
(Josiah)

T O

The Right Honorable

Francis Lord Guilford.

My LORD,

THAT Noble Delight and Industry wherewith your Lordship advances the Knowledge and Service of God, demonstrates the Honour that Almighty God does You, in making You Eminent in that Work, for which He sent his Son into the World. And on this Account, those Schools of Charity which your Lordship, together with Other Persons of great Worth and Quality, have studiously Advanced in this City and other Parts; those Good Books which are by these Means distributed into poor Families; and those Catechetical Libraries which are about to

be compiled in this Nation and our Plantations abroad, will be acknowledged with sensible Respect and Gratitude, by all but such as have slight Thoughts of the Benefits, of God manifest in the Flesh to destroy the Works of the Devil: Which is such a Pitch of Gross and Odious Insensibleness, as one would hope, could never have appear'd in a Christian Land; but yet, alas! we have too many Notorious Instances of it, thro' the desperate Depravity of Men in their Minds and Manners.

I KNOW, I need not mind your Lordship, tho' some others cannot be call'd upon too often to Consider it, That our Adored Lord and Saviour, arose as a Sun of Righteousness and Truth, to give Light and Warmth to this Dark and Degenerate World: And that the Splendid Beams of

*his Glorious Gospel excel the * Candles of Humane Reason, and those Tapers which the best*

* Prov. 20. 27.

The Dedication.

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best Philosophers held forth to Men; as much as the Glorious Sun exceeds those Twinkling Lamps and Torches, where- with we endeavour to supply its absent Light: Yet, alas! thro' the Depravity of Humane Understanding, and Men's condemning Love of Darkness more than Light; We find some, like the Moles and Bats, declining the Splendor of Divine Revelation, and doting on the Dimness of Humane Reason: Saying with Philostratus, Porphirie, and the Antient Humanists, or rather with Julian and former Apostates, Let my Soul take its Risque with Philosophers, and the Followers of Natural Reason; rather than with the Disciples of a Revealed Religion, and the Admirers of the Book which God sent from Heaven. Like the wayward Jews, who were for deserting the Pillar of Heavenly Fire, which led them into Canaan, and conspired to make a Captain of their own,

who might lead them back into Egyptian Darknels again. An amazing Choice! and what cannot otherwise be accounted for,

but by what the Apostle hath
 * 2 Cor. 4. 4. *told us *; Namely, That*

If the Gospel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not; lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine into them.

WE see indeed with sorrowful Hearts, that it pleases God, to permit the Legions of the Prince of Darknels, to oppose the Kingdom of his Dear Son. And in this great and general Contest, all Men upon Earth are engaged on one side, or

other: For our Saviour
 * Mat. 12. 30. *has declared* that none can*

be considered as Neuters, but that Such as are not with him, are against him. And tho' there be but few of the Devil's

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Confederates, that are hardy enough to own the side they take, but call it the Defence of Humane Reason, or Humane Liberty, or some such Thing; yet, alas! they busily do the Devil's Work, they sap the very Foundations of the Christian Religion (which is the only true) and subvert the Authority of its Sacred Author.

IT is therefore, My Lord, to the great Honour of God, and the great Comfort of devout Minds, that we find some Persons of Eminent Rank, Piety and Honour; who in the Vigor of Youth, in the Height of Worldly Blandishments, and in the Crowds of Corrupt Examples, bravely Trampling on All that the Usurping God of this World can offer, to draw them to his Party; and who in Christian Zeal for the Prince of Light, oppose the pernicious Encroachments of the Spirits of Darknes, and are daily instrumental in discovering to ignorant Souls, the certain Paths which lead to Eternal Light

and Bliss. In which Glorious Work, Your Lordship and the Worthy Gentlemen with You, are very happily engag'd, and will certainly find the Blessed Account of it, in the Accomplishment of those Great and Precious Promises, which are made to such as glorifie their Creator, and administer to the Salvation of Men; which are Things most truly Great and Noble, for which a Wise Man would chiefly wish to Live, and a Good Man would not grudge to Die. And that your Lordship may long be successful in these Divine Enterprizes, and at last reap the Immortal Glory of them, Is the Earnest Desire and Incessant Prayer of,

My LORD,
Your Honour's
Most Respectful
AND
Obedient,
Humble Servant,
Josiah Woodward.

A

SERMON, &c.

PROV. V. 23.

He shall die without Instruction, and in the greatness of his Folly, He shall go astray.

SOLOMON, Who had a very Virtuous Education, and was Honour'd with Singular Communion with God in his Youth, was inspired by the *Holy Ghost* (in his Infinite Love to the Souls of Men) to write this Book of *Proverbs* for the *Instruction of Youth*; as he tells us in the beginning of the Book (*Prov. 1. 4.*) *To teach the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion*: That is, to shew them how blessed it is to be Religious betimes, and to Embrace those Principles of Wisdom and Virtue, which all that despise them in their Youth come to lament in their Age; crying out in the Bitterness of their Spirit at last, *How have I hated Instruction, and my Heart despised Reproof!* Prov. 5. 12.

WE are therefore, to Consider this *Wise Prince* as a Tutor to Youth in this Chapter, and we see, he begins it like a *Grave Catechist* to his Chil-

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Children ; *My Son, attend unto my Wisdom, and bow thine Ear to my Understanding.* (Ver. 1.) In which he intimates, That since he spake to them from the Bowels of a Father, and in the Wisdom of God, all Young Persons (however conceited of their own Wit, and addicted to their own Will, as Youth is apt to be) ought to submit, and bow their Minds and Hearts to his *Divine and Fatherly Instructions.* And knowing the Unsteadiness of Youth in Virtuous Purposes, to Engage them more firmly herein, he shews them in the Sequel of the Chapter ; to what a Deplorable Condition such Young Persons usually come, who slight the Counsels of their Parents and Friends ; and run into those Excesses, to which their *Youthful Lusts* prompt them. He instances in the Lust of *Uncleanness*, and insists upon it throughout the greatest part of this Chapter ; dissuading young People from it, with all the *Argument* and *Earnestness*, that the Matter can be prest : Shewing, that it is a *Deep Pit*, in which People bury their *All* at once. It being a Vice that blinds the Mind, oppresses the Conscience, hardens the Heart, and gives such an Arbitrary Power to the Sensual Faculties, as over-bears all that's Good. And he tells them, that tho' the beginning of such sinful Ways seems *Smooth as Oyl, and Sweet as Honey*, (which is all that can be said for them) yet they appear in the End *as bitter as Wormwood, and sharp as a two edged Sword ; being the direct Road to Hell*, and to Eternal Weeping and Wailing. For, as the poor wandering Youth
hates

of Early Instruction.

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hates Instruction, and will not bear Restraint, but counts those his Enemies who shew him his Danger, and admonish him to do better, he comes at last to that dreadful Case foretold in the Text, viz. to be abandoned of God, and in a great measure forsaken of the *Spirit of Light and Understanding*, and so he dies without Instruction, and in the greatness of his Folly, he goes astray. The Holy Ghost says here, it shall be so with him; intimating, that this is the usual End of such a Vicious and Profligate Youth, he comes most commonly to this Tragical Exit and Conclusion: Namely, to dye as wretchedly as he lived, and to go off his Stage of Vice and Vanity, in Horror and Confusion.

THIS is the dreadfulest Thing under the Sun. To die without the *Knowledge of God*, and his Son *Jesus Christ*, which is *Life Eternal*! to be given up to the *Spirits of Darknes*! and to be led Captive in their *Chains*, and hoodwink'd by their *Delusions*, 'till he comes to be involv'd and immers'd in their *Torments*! This is the Depth of the Misery of Man.

WHAT Parent will not find their Bowels pained, to consider this as the Case of any of their Children? You could not bear it, to see a *Lion* or a *Bear* snatch up a Child of yours in its Devouring Mouth, and carry it off as its Prey. You cannot bear the very Thoughts of the Devil's Appearance in some Horrible Shape, and carrying away your Child in a Visible Manner, before your Eyes: Yet, alas! how many Parents permit the Devil (that *Roaring and Devouring Lion*

Lion, as St. *Peter* calls him) to seize their Children in a way as certain and as terrible, tho' not so Visible.

THEY hear their Children blaspheming God, and offending him daily, grossly and familiarly; by the suggestion of the Devil (which demonstrates them to be under his Power and Management) yet some laugh at all this, and there are but few that are duely concern'd about it. How few are effectually awaken'd to teach their Children their *Catechism* and the *Holy Scriptures*, that they may gird them with that *Sword of the Spirit*, whereby they may defend themselves from the malicious Fury of *Apostate Spirits*? How few are concern'd to teach their Children, the Way to Eternal Bliss, thro' a Converting Faith in our *Lord Jesus Christ*; that they may not thro' the *Greatness of their Folly*, and *Grossness of their Ignorance* go astray; and plunge themselves into the Pit of Eternal Misery?

WHERE there is this pernicious Neglect of Catechizing in Parents, and such as have the Over-sight of Youth, it is an Error which is seldom corrected by Sermons afterwards; because they know not the very Terms and Language of the *Holy Scriptures*, nor the first Rudiments and Principles of *Christian Doctrine*. And thus, alas! the Text comes to be dreadfully exemplified; *They die without Instruction*: They knew not the Lord and Saviour of Men in his saving Offices, and are ignorant of their own sinful and perishing Condition, and of the Terms on
which

which Salvation is offer'd them ; and so, they live and die in destructive Ignorance, and go astray from the Fold of the *True Shepherd*, and fall a Prey into the Mouth of *Him, that lies in wait to devour.*

THIS is, methinks, one of the most moving Cases that one can think of, and calls the loudest for *Christian Compassion* ; and therefore I shall further Explain it in the Following *Observations.*

1. ALL Persons are born in a State of Ignorance and Darknes as to Spiritual Things, being without the due Knowledge of God, and having no suitable Concernment about the Things which belong to their Everlasting Happiness. The Text supposes, that all Young Persons need *Instruction*, and that 'tis the Dreadfulest Thing in the World to die without it.

2. Good *Instruction* in Youth is God's appointed Means, to bring People to the saving Knowledge of himself, and the Attainment of Salvation. The whole Design of this Book verifies this, and 'tis exprest in a multitude of places throughout it.

3. The Neglect of Early Instruction and good Education, is the Ruine of many a Person in both Worlds. They live viciously, and die desperately ; they pass from the Errors and Works of Darknes, to the place of Utter and Eternal Darknes. *They die without Instruction, and go astray*, and perish in their Ignorance and Folly.

I. Let

I. LET us in the first place Consider that which I first Observed, *Namely*, That all Persons are born in a State of *Ignorance and Darkeness*, as to Spiritual Things, being without the due Knowledge of God and the Way of Salvation. The Text supposes, that all Young Persons need *Instruction*, and that it is the dreadfullest Thing in the World to dye without it: And consequently, that Pious Instruction is the most seasonable Blessing that can come to any one in his Youth.

'TIS well Observ'd by *Zophar*, one of *Job's* Friends (*Job* 11. 12.) that *Man is born as the Wild Ass's Colt*, utterly Rude and Unuseful, except it be brought up to Hand, by a very Early and Careful Management; and then it is of great Use and Advantage to us. And we see it plainly so in our Children. If they are left to themselves they are rude, froward, stubborn, wanton, undutiful and unmannerly. Like a neglected Garden, which brings forth Weeds of it self; but needs great Care and Pains to store it with useful Plants.

THERE is, Alas! a general Corruption of Humane Nature, ever since the Apostacy of our first Parents. *We our selves also* (saith the Apostle) *were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures.* (*Tit.* 3. 3.) 'till the Love of God his Saviour appear'd to him by Divine Illumination. And so it is with us all 'till the Grace of God makes us better. For *God is the Father of Lights, and the Author of every good*
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and perfect Gift, (Jam. 1. 17.) and we are directed to *Ask spiritual Wisdom and Understanding of him.* (Ver. 5.)

IF any doubt of this, Let him Consider, whence it is, that such a Reasonable Creature as *Man*, should delight in Things so Unfit and Improper as all the Ways of Vice are ? Whence is it, that Children need no Teacher to lead them to Lying, Pride and Stubbornness ? Whereas they need much Instruction and Correction too, mingl'd with many Promises and Allurements ; to bring them to that which is Good and Vertuous ? Yea, whence is it, that all Men do not Naturally delight in God above all other Objects, since He is undeniably the Best and most Excellent of Beings ? These are Demonstrations of the *Corruption of Man*, and of the Necessity of *Spiritual Regeneration* by the Spirit of God ; bringing him to love and delight in God, in the sincerity of his Soul, e're he can be fit for Heaven, and the nearer Presence of God. Our *Blessed Saviour* hath delivered this with a double Asseveration (*John 3. 5.*) *Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except a Man be born again of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* The *spirit of Wisdom* must clear up his Understanding, and the *Spirit of Holiness* must mortifie his vile Affections and Passions, and turn the Bent and Vigor of his Heart towards God as his Chiefest Good ; or he will not be fit for the Divine State and Work of Heaven, but will be barr'd out of it by the Nature and Constitution of that All Pure and God-like State.

And

AND this our Natural State of Spiritual Ignorance is too gross, and too deep to be removed and remedied by the best Light that *Natural Philosophy* and *Humane Art and Study* can supply us withal, We need a *Light from Heaven*, and *Wisdom from Above*, to make us *Wise unto Salvation*. For, *When in the Wisdom of God* (saith *St. Paul* concerning the conceited *Greek Learning*, which was then in great Vogue and Esteem) *the World by Wisdom knew not God*: That is, (I conceive); when God in his Infinite Wisdom saw, that all the *Humane Wisdom and Learning* in the World, would never bring them to the just and saving Knowledge of himself, as a Righteous God; yet pardoning and justifying a penitent Sinner. *It then pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching*, (or by that plain but powerful Preaching of the *Gospel*, which the *Philosophers* and *Orators* of those times accounted foolish) *to save them that believe*.

MEN have indeed by the *Light of Nature* some Knowledge, That there is a God and a Life to come. But how imperfect this Knowledge is, we see by the many absurd Opinions and barbarous Customs of all those *Heathen Countries*, which are not bless'd with the Knowledge of the *Gospel*. They frame to themselves most unworthy notions of God, they know not how to worship or serve him aright; they have no Apprehension of the only way of being reconciled to God, by the *Blood of his Son*, nor of becoming Good through the *Sanctification of this Spirit*. Yea, we find some of them profess'd Votaries to the Devil, and doing Sacrifice

crifice to their worst Enemy by the most unnatural Murders and Barbarities. Hence the Apostle concludes concerning the unregenerate Part of Mankind, that they *Walk in the Vanity of their Minds, having their Understanding darkened; being alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that is in them*, Eph. 4. 18.

WE may from all this assuredly discern, what sort of Lives such Children are like to live; who are not well *Instructed, Catechized and Govern'd* in their Youth. *That which is born of the Flesh is flesh*, saith our *Blessed Saviour*, (John 3. 6.) Carnal Principles will produce nothing better than a Carnal Life. So then, since Children have none but bad Principles and Inclinations of themselves; what can we expect from them, but the greatest Lewdness and the blackest Impieties; except thro' the Grace of God, and the Care of others, they are better principled? Especially if we consider, How busie and crafty the Devil will always be, to prompt them to all Wickedness; whilst alas! the poor Child is utterly *Ignorant of his Devices*. So that a Youth without Instruction will be like a benighted Traveller, walking alone in the midst of unknown Pits and Precipices; 'tis a Thousand to one, but he falls into some of them to his utter Ruine.

BUT it is God's Will that it should be otherwise, and it should be the Care of all that love and fear God, to bring up their Children in the Knowledge and Service of *their Creator, in the Days of their Youth*; that they may shun the dreadful

Case of the Text, which leads me to the *Second Observation*. viz.

II. THAT good *Instruction in Youth* is God's appointed Means, to bring People to the Saving Knowledge of Himself; and the Attainment of Eternal Life. God is pleased to call to Young People in the beginning of this Chapter, to bow their Ear to *Good Instruction*, that they come not to the *Dreadful End*, foreshewn in the End of the Chapter.

INDEED, the Time of Youth is the most proper Time in *Nature* for good Instruction. Children are apt to catch at every Thing they hear, and to retain it, and repeat it. Their Faculties are fresh and vigorous; and they perceive themselves void of Knowledge, and are greedy to take Information, and soft and capable of any Impression. They are also void of those Prejudices against Truth and Virtue, which they are afterwards likely to take up. And they are not now capable of such bodily Labour, as is apt to hinder their Learning in their more Adult Years. On all these Accounts, the Time of Youth is the fittest of any for *good Instruction*; and the properest Season to plant the *Principles of Religion*. And that chiefly, because 'tis God's Time, and must therefore of Necessity be the fittest and best. The Commandments of God do often bind this Duty very awfully, on the Consciences both of *Parents* to teach their Children; and upon *Children* to mind the Instruction of their Parents and Tutors. Parents are required to *Train up*
their

their Children in the Way that they should go; (Prov. 22. 6.) and Children are required to Obey their Parents in the Lord. (Eph. 6. 1.) Parents are to Bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6. 4.) And Children are commanded to Keep the Commandment of their Father; and not to forsake the Law of their Mother, (Prov. 6. 20.)

AND these Injunctions are enforced by the highest Promises and Threatnings. The Apostle tells us, that the *Fifth Commandment* is the *First Commandment with Promise*; That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long on the Earth. (Eph. 6. 2, 3.) And on the contrary, it is threatned; That *The Eye that mocketh his Father, or despiseth to obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Vallies shall pick it out, and the young Eagles shall eat it.* (Prov. 30. 17.) And suitably to all this, we find the Mother and Grandmother of *Timothy*, commended by the Spirit of God, for instructing their Child in the Scriptures; and *Timothy* is commended for his Proficiency, suitable to his Education. As we read in *St. Paul's Epistles* to him.

AND be it here Observed, That if any one is not taught to Read, and to know his *Catechism* in his Youth; 'tis a Thousand to One, whether ever he learns either of these afterwards. The Senseless Pride of an Ignorant Person, is apt to disdain Instruction in these Things afterwards; and they are utterly ashamed, to acknowledge themselves ignorant of that, in which they perceive, many little Children able to be their Tutors. So that we cannot be too ur-

gent with all Parents, and such as have the Management of Children, that they begin early to instruct them in the *Scriptures* and in their *Catechisms*; and that they take Care that they learn to read betimes, that they may of themselves, *Draw water out of the Wells of Salvation*. For it is a most deplorable and moving Case, that God should send us a Book from Heaven, concerning our Eternal Salvation; and that any among us should say, as those (*Isa. 29. 12.*) *I cannot read it, for I am not learned*: Tis written in unknown Characters as to me, because I was never taught to read. We many times now hear, such Ignorant Persons blaming their Parents for neglecting them in their Youth; when they come to perceive the want of such Learning, as they might have attained in their Youth; and tis to be feared, that too many such Parents, will hear the more doleful Accusations and Curses of their wretched Children, in their Torments hereafter. Where it may probably be said by many a Person, had my Parents taught me better, I might have escaped these *Everlasting Burnings*. This leads me to my *Third Observation*. viz.

III. THAT the Neglect of Good Education and Early Instruction, is the Ruine of many a Person in both Worlds. 'They are brought up negligently, they live viciously, and dye desperately. This was so sadly verify'd in the Case of *Eli's Sons*, (*1 Sam. 3.*) that tis enough to terrifie every sensible Person out of such Neglect. His Sons were first *Children of Darknes*, then

then *Sons of Belial*, and then *Sons of Perdition*. And thus, alas! it usually fares with Uncorrected, Ungovern'd and Uncatechiz'd Children; as it will further appear in the five following Particulars; which demonstrate the dismal Case of Ignorant and Undisciplin'd Youth.

(1.) THEY cannot live as *Christians*, if they know not the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion. A Man can act no better than his Principles dictate to him. And such as are not taught the Principles of the Christian Religion, are never like to have them. An express Faith in our Lord *Jesus Christ* is necessary to the Salvation of a Christian, (*Mar. 16. 16.*) *He that believeth not shall be damned.* But how can they Believe on him, of whom they have not heard? How can they come to know the Person, the Offices, the Covenant, the Sacraments, and the Will of our Lord and Saviour; except they learn it by the Instruction of their Parents and Friends, out of their *Bibles* and *Catechisms*? 'Tis true, the Foundation of the Sacred *Morals* of our Religion is laid in *Nature* it self, and the Equity, Fitness and Reasonableness of them is discernable by Natural Light. For, *Why of your selves judge ye not that which is right?* Says our Blessed Lord, (*Luke 12. 57.*) But then, the Light of Nature is so dim and faint, that it will soon be obscured and overlaid by sinful Customs; and if the *Light which is in Men be darkness, how gross is that Darkness!* (*Mat 6. 23.*) How extravagantly vicious will those Affections and Passions be, which have no Light by which they may steer; and no good Principles from

which they may act? Such uncatechized Children, I say, cannot be good Christians; yea, they usually prove the worst of Men. For,

(2.) For want of being grounded in the Essentials of Christian Doctrine, they are easily misled into any *Error* or *Heresie*. It may be Observed, that there was scarce ever any foolish Opinion started, but the vain Author found some, as vain as himself to follow him in it. As in the Case of *Mahomet*, *Mugleton* and others. And it can be nothing but Ignorance, that is the Mother of such Devotion: The Ignorant catch at any thing. And hence proceed those Unhappy *Divisions* and *Parties* that are among us; which is in a great measure owing to the want of due Catechizing. *The Enemy sowed Tares*, whilst those were *asleep*, that should have sown better Grain.

(3.) These Undisciplin'd and Uncatechized Persons usually prove ill Members of the *State*; and the very Pest of the Neighbourhood, in which they live. One may indeed call them, the very Vermin of the Publick Body. Hence come those Swarms of idle, pilfering and purloining People, of which we hear daily Complaints, and feel the dismal Effects. Some of which are so crafty in their Devices, and so harden'd in their Wickedness, that they seem to be the very *Black Guard* of the Prince of Darkness; and a fruitful Nursery of a sort of People, which fill the Goals and load the *Gallows*. A very sad, but a very great Truth.

(4.) These Untaught and Uneducated People are they, who chiefly bring a Reproach on our
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Religion, and the *Church of Christ amongst us*. They live like Infidels in a Christian Land: And many of them being bred up to no Employment at Home, are forc'd by their Necessities to seek their Bread abroad; and so they carry our Shame, together with their Villanies, into Forreign Parts. And many Forreigners take up a Prejudice against our *Nation*, and against our *Religion*, by what they see and suffer from these Profligates; which has proved a great Bar to the Progress of the *Christian Religion*.

(5.) THAT which is yet the most dreadful Thought of all, is, That the God that made them will reject them at the last. *They are a People of no Understanding* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) therefore he that made them will not have Mercy upon them, and he that formed them will shew them no Favour. (Isa. 27. 11.) They bear the Image and Superscription of their Father, the Prince of Darkness; and will be adjudged to him by the just Judgment of him, *In whom there is no Darkness at all*. They have long lived in Defiance and Enmity to him, that came to be the *Light and Life of the World*; they hated the Light of the Gospel, and the Guidance of his Holy Spirit; they have pleased themselves with the Delusions of the Devil, and therefore they fall a Prey to him; as Apostates from their Creator: And as they loved *Darkness more than Light*, they must inevitably take their Portion in *Eternal Darkness*: For, *They die without Instruction, and go astray from God, and his Beatifick Presence*.

O Dreadful End, of such as are neglected, ⁱⁿ reformed!

reformed ! Enough to create Horror in every Soul that considers it. Who is there, that has any thing of the *Spirit of Christ in him*, that would not think a great part of his Care, Pains and Estate well laid out, if he may but be Instrumental to save some few ; yea, but one single Person, from this Eternal Ruine ? And that I may encline every one that hears me, to take this moving and mournful Case into Consideration, I now come to apply what has been said.

SINCE the Case of gross Ignorance is thus dreadful and deplorable, We may see,

Infer. 1. TO how Divine and Blessed a State the Holy Gospel of our Lord tends to lead us ! It comes to retrieve us from the destructive Darkeness of Sin and Satan ; to knock off the Fetters of the Prince of Darkneſs, who had led us *Captive at his Will* ; and to translate us to the *Light and Liberty of the Sons of God*. We may better spare the Light of the Sun, than that of the Gospel ; for this is the Light of our Souls, and the Foundation of our Hope, and the Dawning of Everlasting Light. Here we have perfect Truth, infinite Mercy, safe Directions, and strong Consolations. We may challenge all the *Philosophy* that ever appear'd in the Word, to give us so much *Divinity*, as we can view in one Chapter of the *New Testament* ; and we are sure that all the Riches of the whole World are not of such Value, as one of the Promises of that Blessed Book. O that it were more frequently in our Hands, more deep in our Hearts, and more legible in our Lives.

Infer. 2.

Infer. 2. SINCE the Case of gross Ignorance is thus dreadful, what a constraining Argument is this to all Parents and Governours of Youth; to be very Early, very Conscientious and Industrious in Catechizing and Instructing their Children. One would think, that it were enough to drive Parents to Distraction, to think of any dying Child of theirs, as going to Eternal Misery, for want of due Instruction. If any Parents should starve their Children, by denying them necessary Food when they have Plenty of it by them; the whole Neighbourhood would cry Shame on such a detestable Barbarity, and count them worthy of Death for it: And surely the Destruction of an *Immortal Soul*, will one Day appear as hateful and as Criminal. So that the Ease of their own Minds and Consciences, ought to quicken Parents to this Duty; and besides, they cannot reasonably expect any Comfort in their Children, nor Duty from them, if they be not well instructed. We must carefully cultivate and manure our Fields, if we would reap a comfortable Harvest; otherwise they will produce nothing but Weeds and Thorns to offend and wound us.

Infer. 3. SINCE the Case of gross Ignorance and the want of Education is thus pernicious; What greater Charity can we shew to Humane Nature, than to contribute towards the Instruction of those; who will otherwise very probably die without it? Solomon tells us, that *Instruction is rather to be chosen than Silver, and Knowledge rather than choice Gold*, (Prov. 8. 10.) From which it follows,

lows, That such as educate their Children well are greater Friends to them than such as leave them a Temporal Estate. For indeed, an Estate bequeathed to such, as have neither Knowledge to use it well, nor Principles to do good with it; is like a Sword in the Hand of a Madman, with which he will be likely to do much harm to himself and others. Whereas on the other Hand, Good Manners and Christian Behaviour recommends the meanest Person to all that know him; and that Good Providence which orders all things, will not leave them destitute of outward Necessaries, *Who seek the Kingdom of God in the first place.* (Mat. 6. 33.)

I cannot therefore, without Praise to God, turn my Eyes towards those many Children before us; who at once adorn the House of God, and shew forth the Honour of those Persons, by whose Care and Charity they are brought to *Christian Education*. Praised be God, who put so worthy a Design into the Minds of Men, and who has enlarged the Hearts of any to contribute generously towards it. This gives us some Hopes of the Continuance of God's Mercies to us, especially that Mercy of Mercies his *Holy Gospel*. We hope, the next Generation will prize it more, and practise it better than this has done; *That it may be well with them, and with their Children.*

THIS should prompt us, yea, bring us under a sort of Necessity; to put forth our selves to the utmost to advance the Good Education of Children, and to promote *Christian Knowledge* in all others that want it; which we may do these three Ways.

First,

First, BY personal Conference: Taking Pains to instruct those Children, and other Ignorant People, with whom we converse, in the Knowledge of the *Great Things of God's Law*; and especially in those practical and necessary Truths, in which the *Essentials* of our Holy Religion consist. Christians are to be as *Salt*, to all that keep Company with them, to season them with the Savour of Christian Doctrine. * This does indeed, principally concern *Ministers*, who are to be *Burning and Shining Lights* in their Generation; whose particular Visits to the Houses of their People, and personal Enquiry into their State and Manner of Life; is of very great Use to the Advancement of Religion in Families, and to excite that Christian Affection to their Minister; which will make his Instructions the more effectual upon them.

Secondly, ANOTHER Way of advancing Spiritual Instruction is, by giving and dispersing good Books abroad in the World, especially to poor Families. This may in some Cases do more good than personal Discourse, in that a good Book abides with the Person to whom it's given; and will lie before his Eyes at all Seasons, and perhaps some Affliction or some other good Providence, may be a means to awaken and soften his Heart; and make it fit to receive Instruction, and to prize a Book of Devotion. And blessed be God, we have many *Honourable and Reverend Persons* happily engaged in this Excellent Work; which we must acknowledge to be one of the best

best of Charities. And in this, those that are Wealthy will do well to consider, the Deplorable Case of our *Plantations*; in which most Dr. Bray. Christian Work, a very *Pious and Reverend Person* has adventured his *All*, with a sort of *Apostolick Charity* to the Souls of Men. In this Noble Design, all that really love our *Blessed Saviour* and his *Gospel*, cannot but pray to God to prosper him. Surely 'tis time for such as love the Kingdom of God, and repeat the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, (*Thy Kingdom come*) to set themselves in good earnest, to retrench the Encroachments of the *Prince of Darkness*.

Thirdly, WE may be instrumental to promote the Instruction of others, by contributing, according to our Ability, towards the maintainance of poor Children at School; who may otherwise, thro' the Poverty of their Parents, be too likely to *Dye without Instruction*. And blessed be God, who hath so far enclined the Hearts of many Persons to consider this; that there are now in and about this City, about a *Thousand poor Children* taught to read, and instructed in their Catechisms; and brought up to other Things, which tend to make them useful in their Generation; thro' the *Christian Charity* of Well-disposed Persons. A most Excellent Work, towards which, all that duely know the Gospel, cannot but be Glad to contribute, that they may share the in vast Blessings that attend it.

I am confident I need not tell you, that *Christian Charity* is necessary to a *Christian Life*; since the

the Apostle tells us, that all our other Works tho' never so splendid, *will avail us nothing without Charity* (1 Cor. 13.). And indeed, there are so many Commands in the Gospel which require it, and so many Promises which enforce it, that we must quit our Christian Faith if we renounce this Christian Grace.

SUPPOSING therefore, that your Christian Breasts glow with Charitable Affections and Dispositions; you have only two Things to look to in the Exercise of your Charity: Namely, *First*, That you give to a good Design: And, *Secondly*, That you deliver it to such Hands, as will faithfully employ it according to your Intention.

1. AS to the *First*, Contribution towards the Teaching of Children to read, and to the Instructing them in the Principles of Religion and Virtue; is one of the most Extensive, Good Designs, that we can readily think of. For Instance,

(1.) YOU'LL hereby prevent much Wickedness in the World. You'll be likely to bring those Lips to praise God, who might otherwise blaspheme his Holy Name. You may hereby diminish, and we hope in the Progress of it, thin the Kingdom of Satan, and increase and greaten the Number of the *Flock of Christ*.

(2.) HEREBY, you take the likeliest Way to make the meaner sort of People useful in their Generation. Such as perhaps might otherwise have robb'd or injur'd you, may thro' *Christian Instruction* become a faithful Servant to you, or an useful Artift by you, or an honest Neighbour
near

near You : Yea, perhaps out of those little Nurseries of Virtue and Good Manners, there may arise some *Eminent Citizens*, who may themselves be able to relieve others, and to be Benefactors to that place which was so careful of them, and bountiful to them in their Feeble and Helpless State.

(3.) HEREBY, You administer to them in the best sort of Gifts. You become Eyes to the Blind, Knowledge to the Ignorant, Wisdom to the Foolish ; and perhaps Salvation to such as might otherwise have perish'd without Instruction. When we see a poor neglected Child groveling in a Dunghill, begging in the Streets, or wallowing in Wickedness : Let us Consider, that this poor Creature has an *Immortal Soul* as well as we ; yea, perhaps he has good Natural Parts, and if he were but well Educated, he might be of Great Use in his Generation. However, we are sure he has a Soul *for which Christ died* ; and might share in the infinite Glories of Heaven, if due Care were taken of him. O ! how can any Christian Bowels but yearn over such a Melting Object ?

IT was a particular Case very like to this, that moved the present Divinity-Professor of *Halle in Saxony*, Dr. *Franken* ; to compassionate the Ignorance of poor People, and by his Exhortations and Interest to procure the Erecting of a Colledge, for the Maintainance and Instruction of about a hundred poor Children. But I must pass on to what remains.

(4.) AS by this Charity, you'll have many Prayers put up to Heaven for you ; so whatever

ever Good they are brought to do thro' this their Virtuous Education, will in a great measure redound to your Account. For, *Such as turn many to Righteousness, will shine as the Stars for Ever and Ever.* (Dan. 12. 3.)

2. THIS clears the *First* Point, Namely, The Goodness of the Design. And now as to the *Second*, Namely, Your being sure that what you give, is faithfully disposed of according to your Charitable Intention. Your own Eyes see it, in those Comely Classes of Youth before You; and your Ears have heard the Proof of their Instruction, in the principal Doctrines of our Holy Religion. In which they give a good Example to other Youth,¹ in the Exactness and² Audibleness of their Answers,³ in their devout Behaviour, and⁴ their Melodious Singing of Psalms; in which, I pray God incline all our Children to follow them.

AND this minds me of an Act of *Charity*, in which Every One may contribute towards the Advancement of these Christian Designs; Namely, In Hearty Prayer for God's Blessing upon them. In this, the poorest Person that is, may be a *Benefactor*. And Oh! May we all be Earnest in Prayer to God, that it may please him to *Fill the Earth with the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, as the Waters cover the Sea.* That, as in the Sea, there is no Gap or Discontinuance of the Expanded Waters; so there may be no Ignorance of *Christian Doctrine* upon Earth; and so, no Ground whereon to Erect the Kingdom of Darkness. But that *All Peo-*
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ple may know the Lord from the least to the greatest; from the Child that is coming into the World, to the Old Man that is going out of it; that so, none may incur the Dreadful Doom of the Text; that is, *To dye without Instruction*; and go astray from God and his Kingdom. Which God Almighty grant for the Sake of Jesus Christ, who died to *Turn us from Darknes to Light*, and from the *Power of Satan unto God*. Amen.

FINIS.
